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## **The Psalms of Lament**

**PART 4: Psalm 44**

**When We Want to Ask “Why?”**

### **Part 4 – Psalm 44**

- **Shuffle the Deck**
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- **What Are You Holding?**
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## Part 4 – Psalm 44

### Shuffle the Deck

1. Take a walk outside and gather sticks, leaves, feathers, flowers, stones, etc. Try one of these ideas in your journal:
  - Do a little free associative writing about your finds.
  - Write an acrostic using the letters in “autumn.”
  - Make impressions of your finds in clay.
  - Use crayons to try to match the colors in a flower petal or leaf, then doodle a border around your journaling page.
  - Press the flowers and leaves for use in your card project.
  - Use tempera paint to turn your finds into simple stamps.
  - Make a rubbing of the things you’ve found.
2. Write down a story that’s been passed down from one generation to the next in your family. If you can’t think of one, write down one of your favorite family traditions or a memory about your childhood.

### Deal the Cards

“Suffering may be a battle scar rather than a punishment--the price of loyalty in a world that is at war with God.” --Derek Kidner

1. Prayerfully read [Psalm 44](#).

44:1 O God, we have clearly heard; our ancestors have told us what you did in their days, in ancient times.

44:2 You, by your power, defeated nations and settled our fathers on their land; you crushed the people living there and enabled our ancestors to occupy it.

44:3 For they did not conquer the land by their swords, and they did not prevail by their strength, but rather by your power, strength and good favor, for you were partial to them.

44:4 You are my king, O God! Decree Jacob's deliverance!

44:5 By your power we will drive back our enemies; by your strength we will trample down our foes!

44:6 For I do not trust in my bow, and I do not prevail by my sword.

44:7 For you deliver us from our enemies; you humiliate those who hate us.

44:8 In God I boast all day long, and we will continually give thanks to your name. (Selah)

44:9 But you rejected and embarrassed us! You did not go into battle with our armies.

44:10 You made us retreat from the enemy. Those who hate us take whatever they want from us.

44:11 You handed us over like sheep to be eaten; you scattered us among the nations.

44:12 You sold your people for a pittance; you did not ask a high price for them.

44:13 You made us an object of disdain to our neighbors; those who live on our borders taunt



and insult us.

44:14 You made us an object of ridicule among the nations; foreigners treat us with contempt.

44:15 All day long I feel humiliated and am overwhelmed with shame,

44:16 before the vindictive enemy who ridicules and insults me.

44:17 All this has happened to us, even though we have not rejected you or violated your covenant with us.

44:18 We have not been unfaithful, nor have we disobeyed your commands.

44:19 Yet you have battered us, leaving us a heap of ruins overrun by wild dogs; you have covered us with darkness.

44:20 If we had rejected our God, and spread out our hands in prayer to another god,

44:21 would not God discover it, for he knows one's thoughts?

44:22 Yet because of you we are killed all day long; we are treated like sheep at the slaughtering block.

44:23 Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O sovereign Master? Wake up! Do not reject us forever!

44:24 Why do you look the other way, and ignore the way we are oppressed and mistreated?

44:25 For we lie in the dirt, with our bellies pressed to the ground.

44:26 Rise up and help us! Rescue us because of your loyal love!

2. This is a Maskil. Find out what a "[Maskil](#)" is. (If you have *Ryrie Study Bible*, see the note at Psalm 32.)
  
3. List three things God did for Israel listed in verses 1-3.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. List things He has done in your past to show His love.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Read verse 1. How did Israel learn of God's past faithfulness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Read verse 4. Then read [Genesis 35:10-12](#). Why does the writer poetically refer to Israel as "Jacob"?



35:10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but your name will no longer be called Jacob; Israel will be your name." So God named him Israel. 35:11 Then God said to him, "I am the Sovereign God. Be fruitful and multiply! A nation--even a company of nations--will descend from you; kings will be among your descendants! 35:12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you. To your descendants I will also give this land."

7. In verse 6, the author indicates he will not trust in the wrong things.
  - (A) What were those things?
  
  - (B) Do you ever substitute things for God as your source of security? If so, what are those things? Spend some time praying that the Lord will remove the gods in your life and replace them with Himself.
  
8. What does verse 7 indicate God did for them?
  
  
9. What does verse 8 say their response was? For how long will they praise God?
  
  
10. List the afflictions now facing the nation in verses 9-16:  

<i>Disasters</i>	<i>Disgraces</i>
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11. Note the difference in pronouns between verses 9-14 and 15-16. What does this say about how national trauma can affect individuals?



12. What has been Israel's response to such difficulties (verses 17-18)?

13. Despite their response, what has been the result (vs. 19)?

Note the progression of events:

- a. We heard about God and how He saved us (1)
- b. We boasted in Him (8)
- c. But He put us to shame (9-12)
- d. But we still trusted (17)
- e. But He let us be killed anyway (19)

Do you know people who have been faithful to the Lord, yet their circumstances have not improved? What questions does this raise for the psalmist (vs. 24)? For you? What emotions does this evoke?

14. Are these bad circumstances coming as a consequence of the Israelites' sin (20-22)?

15. Why are they being put to death (22)?

16. Contrast what God has done with Israel in the past (1-3) with what He appears to be doing as the psalmist is writing (19-22).

17. Why does the writer say God should rise up, help and redeem them (26)?



## What Are You Holding?

18. The writer's response to difficulty is prayer. What does he request in verses 23-26?

It may sound like a cliché to say we need to pray about our difficulties, but sometimes we are quick to call all our friends instead of pouring out our hearts to God. Is there something for which you need to pray—really pray?

19. [Psalm 121:4](#) says God never slumbers nor sleeps (*121:4 Look! Israel's protector does not sleep or slumber!*). Why do you think the psalmist asks God to awaken in verse 23?

20. Note that Paul provides an assurance in response to believers who have the very questions raised—actually quoting this Psalm. Read [Romans 8:35-39](#). According to Romans 8:35, what are some of the circumstances God allows his loved ones to endure?

8:35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 8:36 As it is written, "*For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*" 8:37 No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

21. What great assurances do we find in [Romans 8:37-39](#) in response to these? Note that we are not told *why* God does this, but we are assured that we're loved in spite of how it may feel. Spend time thanking God for having that kind of love.



**Group Option:**

As a group, make a list of no more than 6 things we as a society or individuals commonly seek for security instead of God. Discuss why you think we seek these things for security over and over again.

**Play Your Hand**

Decorate a playing card or a playing-card-sized piece of paper or cardboard that expresses one of the following:

- How God has proven Himself faithful to you in the past.
- What your first response to difficulty is.
- How it feels to hear God say He loves you and yet He allows you to be “put to death.”
- Your response to this truth: “Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”